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JULY 25, 2025 | VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 16

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Birthday freebies in Washtenaw County. **page 5**

MEET YOUR VENDOR: **CINDY GERE** PAGE 3

GROUNDCOVER 15

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Groundcover News turns 15: Origin story, community impacts and future prospects. **page 8**

Left to right: **Mike J. , Mike B., Pony, Shawn (front) Cindy, Brian, Ken (front), Augustine, and Tygar.**

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venmo

@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY POVERTY,
PRODUCING A STREET NEWSPAPER THAT GIVES A PLATFORM TO UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY,
PROMOTING AN ACTION TO BUILD A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for $2, keeping all income and tips from each sale. Vendors are the main contributors to the paper, and are compensated to write and report.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

International Network of Street Papers

GROUNDCOVER NEWS IS NOW 16 PAGES! Look forward to ...

Community events section

MORE money saving coupons!

Writing from around the world — International Network of Street Papers news articles

vendor drawings, cartoons + artwork

ROTATING TOPIC RESOURCE CORNER

"FROM THE ARCHIVES," a column on Washtenaw County history, told through the Groundcover archives

Even more vendor writing

IN EVERY ISSUE!

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WAYS TO SUPPORT

1. **Buy the paper, read the paper.**
2. **Get the word out** — We rely on grassroots marketing. Talk to people about Groundcover and share us with your network.
3. **Volunteer** — You'll learn a lot about our vendors, the newspaper and your community. Interested in volunteering regularly? Fill out the form on our website.
4. **Advertise** your company, organization, event or resource — see rates below.
5. **Follow us on Facebook and Instagram** — promote our posts and share your favorite articles and vendor interactions.
6. **Donate items** — A seasonally appropiate list of items most needed at our office and on the street is available on our website. Drop off anytime we're open.

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES

Size	Black/White	Color	Dimensions (W x H in inches)
1/8	$110.00	$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5
1/6	$145.00	$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	$200.00	$265.00	5 X 6.25
1/2	$375.00	$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5
full page	$650.00	$900.00	10.25 X 13

PACKAGE PRICING

Three Months/Six Issues: **15%** off
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Full Year/Twenty-four Issues: **35%** off
Only run for two weeks/one issue: **40%** off
Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

MEET YOUR VENDOR

Cindy Gere, vendor No. 279

In one sentence, who are you? Happy Go Lucky Panda / Happy Hats Lady.

Where do you usually sell Groundcover? Downtown Sweetwaters on Ashley and Washington from 7-11 a.m.

When and why did you start selling Groundcover? I usually sell in the mornings when it's not rainy. I choose to sell for the people; many love the paper.

What is one place in Ann Arbor that feels like your personal sanctuary? I love the library and the seating they have in front of the big bay windows — it's a quiet location.

What's your life motto? I do what I can where I can when I can to help who I can.

What advice would you give to your younger self? Never give up or give in during the hard days.

What is your comfort food? Authentic Japanese food.

If you were stranded on a desert island and could only bring 3 things, what would they be? Military grade spy goggles, food for the trip and Harry Potter's griffin to get off the island.

If there was a theme song for your life, what would it be? Hakuna Matata (No Worries).

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Get on the trusty horse and go west! :)

What change would you like to see in Washtenaw County? Working Family tiny house village. Based on long term sobriety!

Oath to defend the Constitution

SCOOP STEVENS
Groundcover vendor No. 638

When someone serves in America's armed forces, they begin their military service by taking an oath to defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic. After taking this oath there is no further instruction on the Constitution during a soldier's active duty military service. If American generals were serious about their oath, they would make Constitution studies a part of a soldier's military service requirements.

After successfully completing a three-year enlistment, the American soldier would be honorably discharged with a military service Constitution studies certification. Those who were unable to complete the coursework during their enlistment would be given a general discharge and not be awarded the certification.

Those who want to continue their military service education after completing their three-year enlistment and re-enlist would be awarded a master's military service Constitution studies degree after successfully completing coursework and service requirements. Those who could not complete the coursework during their reenlistment would be honorably discharged without receiving the degree but would retain the college credits they earned and be able to use them to further their education.

Hear me out: Donald Trump should declare world peace

DAVID L. PUTMAN
Groundcover vendor No. 679

Our 45th and 47th President, Donald J. Trump is considered a moron, by whom? The man is a tactical genius in all ways but one; his surprise attack on Iran was unjust. I believe he's uniquely situated to become the first world leader ever to declare World Peace at the next U.N. Summit. He can explain his position, and face the consequences. Let the citizens and people of the world follow.

With all the propaganda and misinformation in the world it's hard to tell when a news organization is telling the truth. Well, I am telling my truth. Donald Trump could declare world peace. If our supposedly beloved President is the great organizer he says he is, can he organize peace? Or is he just another warmonger? That's what I want to know.

Can he really do it? Since the invention of the nuclear bomb, nations have already agreed to nuclear disarmament treaties, but someone in the White House was quoted as saying the United States won't follow, nor Russia and N. Korea. Can the White House legally refuse to follow disarmament, according to international law? Can any government, due to the Geneva convention?

Disarmament needs to get organized, better and better, every day in every way. We need nuclear disarmament technical certifications, in every language. So we can turn those old bomb cores into power plants. And flying cars!

The war against ISIS, is it still just for oil? Why did we go to war for oil? Were the old guard just too stupid to use diplomacy? Were the diplomats not bilingual enough? Multilingual? Peace takes time. And translation. And patience. And wisdom. And a truce is always possible. Truce, among nations, in our time. Good luck, Earth humans. And American citizens.

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.
- When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current biweekly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling an issue more than 4 weeks old.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor Corner Policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code or leave positive review of a Vendor experience please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

Ranked Choice Voting

Dear Ms. Price,

Please publish this as a letter to you, for sharing with your paper's readers.

The October 4, 2024 issue of Groundcover News ran an article on page 7, which article was submitted by me, and ran under the title, "Ranked Choice Voting — enhancing democracy."

You and your readers may be interested in the following updates on the state of affairs regarding the current efforts to get Ranked Choice Voting available to voters in Michigan, in the elections for candidates for Federal and State-wide offices:

1. On June 27, 2025, the Board of Canvassers for the State of Michigan approved the wording of a proposal to be put on the petitions to be presented to the public, to sign to get the issue of Ranked Choice Voting on the ballot to be used in the November 2026 election to amend the State Constitution.

2. Persons supporting the organization behind getting RCV in effect in Michigan, which organization is called "Rank MI Vote," packed the public viewing area of the room where the June 27 meeting was held; more were seated in an "overflow" room.

3. Scuttlebutt has it that: a) penchant office holders and powerbrokers of both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, together with top 0.1% U.S. wealth-holders, are broadly united by their opposition to RCV; it threatens their power, and the peculiar interests they serve; and b) large amounts of "dark" money is flowing into Michigan, to fight the RCV movement.

4. In the interest of brevity, I will not here quote the draft of the proposal (limited to 100 words) which was approved by the Board of Canvassers. The draft can be had online. One site having it has the URL:

www.fox2detroit.com/news/board-approves-ranked-choice-voting-summary-residents-will-see petitions. The proposal is at the bottom of the site-page.

5. My article of October 4, 2024 was generally favorable to RCV, but I also expressed some concerns. I remain a little curious as to how well RCV will operate if enacted by the voters, but despite my residual reservations concerning RCV, I am largely convinced that if RCV is enacted, there will be a marked improvement in the general atmosphere in which campaign season plays out, that voters will be much more satisfied with the choices they had to make, the public will be much happier with the election results, and governance will be greatly improved. I will be supporting RCV in November 2026. If RCV as proposed is enacted and then found to need "tweaking," Michiganders are well able to do it. I do not foresee any major problems if RCV is enacted, and am ready to follow an old adage: RCV should not be compared to some elusive, theoretical ideal; it should be compared to the status-quo. With that approach, I find the status-quo to be seriously inadequate.

6. Rank MI Vote is now approaching the early stages of signature collection. The grassroots movement is gathering momentum; the reader who longs for an improved democracy is urged to pitch in and contribute to their efforts.

Rank MI Vote has a website that can be accessed by an easy search on "Rank MI Vote." It has a wealth of information about RCV and the effort afoot. I also receive regular emails from Rank MI Vote which keep me abreast of current events in the RCV movement.

Best wishes,
David KE Dodge

August 5, vote no on Prop B

Last November the City reserved $1,000,000 from an unanticipated surplus for anticipated losses from Trump's restrictions on federal funds. At the time I proposed they use $40,000 of the $2.5 million surplus for their promised Request for Proposals for next steps on the commons development, which they declined to consider.

Then, this April, they undertook to spend what the City Clerk estimated might be a cost of $250,000 for a special August election, a special unnecessary August election.

Nothing is furthered by posing the Library expansion and housing project now, with no details, rather than in a year and a half when they might be able to present a beautiful picture of their state-of-the-art desire, which now they leave only to the imagination and promises of good intentions.

I asked what is to be gained by an August off-year vote now, contrary to past City policy since 2017 of "never again" for August off-year elections? No answer. I asked again to the Library Board Chairperson, the Library Director and the City Council Member who voted for this as-soon-as-possible election.

Again no answer ... because there is no good reason. In my view, this is a calculated political stratagem to blindside the voters who hardly know what has been going on in the Center of the City, after six and a half years of stalling the voter-directed commons development, and new six-month highrise of a spectacular 20 floor double lot new downtown library with housing on top, miraculously paid for itself with no new taxes.

Pictures of the Commons proposal, which is to be suppressed, were never viewed by the Council of the Commons or the City Council, though they did get a good presentation in the local MLive paper. Pictures of the new Library-mixed use housing proposal do not exist.

I argue that the vote itself is illegal because the City is spending time and money contrary to the City Charter to sell land for mixed use development that is designated in perpetuity as a central park and civic center commons, voted into the City Charter by 26,752 citizen voters, more than the City gets its lawyers to say; that's OK because proposal B repeals the proposed commons out of the Charter and A and B are cleverly linked together.

And what if B doesn't pass? Then, all the money and time spent on the election was illegal. Does the City Administrator have liability for the quarter million dollar cost, or the Mayor or each Council Member out of their salaries, authorizing use of taxpayer money in violation of the City Charter?

I proposed, so far without success, that a People's Lawyer volunteer to take this illegality to the Circuit Court to get an injunction to stop this Election in violation of the City Charter. The election is on. I wrote a little leaflet; please vote No on A and B on August 5.

I hope people have enough opportunity to think about it, and vote to continue the commons commitment for an urban park and civic center, and vote no on B, to not-repeal the Center of the City 1.4 section of the City Charter.

I do not want the Center of the City dominated by a maximum tall double lot building, either, whatever it is called.

If "No on B" wins, and the City Charter is upheld, then A is moot, or any such sale.

I still want a central park and civic center commons; I hope all those who did before, still do want the commons and will call your friends.

Personal connections are our strength. Enlist your lists. If this overview can help educate, please use it ... and suggest improvements to greater clarity.

Vote No on B.

Alan Haber, Ann Arbor Voter

Thank you Mike Jones

Dear Groundcover,

I'd like to take a moment to thank Mike Jones for his article called "Art on a Journey!" Not only did it highlight the artistic resources Ypsi/Ann Arbor provides, it highlighted the need to continue making artistic opportunities accessible for all people in our community. I was specifically appreciative of the paragraph that said, "Imagine on this journey you find yourself unhoused. Imagine trying to create when displaced, and constantly on the move. Imagine having all these artistic visions in your head but not being able to manifest them because you are too occupied with basic survival..."

I am a teacher and artist in Ann Arbor. If there is any resource for me to get involved with local individuals working to make artistic experiences more accessible, could you please let me know? I also think I bought an issue of Groundcover from Mike this morning in front of the YMCA, so thanks to him for throwing in this additional issue from last week that allowed me to read about this topic that's close to my heart.

Take care,
Kaiti McGinn

community **EVENTS**

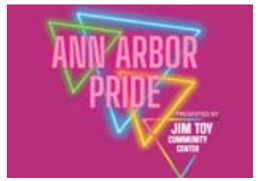
AADL SUMMER GAME SPECTACULAR
Saturday, August 26, 1 p.m.
Veterans Memorial Park
Join Summer Game players and community members for a spectacular celebration of all things Summer Game! Circus performances, lawn games, ice cream, game codes and more await at the annual summer celebration.

RESILIENCE REVEALED: ANN ARBOR'S DISABILITY LEGACY
Sunday, August 27, 6 p.m.
AADL downtown branch, 1st floor
The premiere of Resilience Revealed, a new documentary on the role Ann Arbor has played in the world of accessibility and disability activism. Filmmaker Zach Damon will introduce the film and take questions afterwards.

GERMAN PARK PICNIC
Saturday, August 26, 4-11 p.m.
German Park, 5549 Pontiac Trail
German Park Recreation Club hosts three picnics the last Saturday in June, July, and August. Admission gate open 4-9 p.m.; Park closes at 11 p.m. Live music, authentic German food and live dance performances.

WALK WITH FRIENDS
Saturdays through Sept. 27, 8:30 a.m.
Start and finish at 105 Michigan Ave. Ypsilanti
Walk With Friends is a community event; walk 2 miles through downtown and Riverside Park as a social group. All ages welcome.

FIRST FRIDAYS YPSI
Friday, August 1, 5 p.m.
Downtown Ypsi and Depot Town
Explore area businesses to shop exclusive discounts, attend pop-up events and galleries featuring Ypsilanti area artists and performers, and experience the Ypsi arts scene in all its forms.
First Friday Food Court at Growing Hope (16 S. Washington), 5-8 p.m.
—This vibrant event features a rotating lineup of local food entrepreneurs offering delicious, diverse, and affordable eats, including vegan and vegetarian options.



ANN ARBOR PRIDE
August 2, 2025, 12-9 p.m.
Main Street Ann Arbor
Festival celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer identities, community, and allyship hosted by the Jim Toy Community Center. 200+ vendors, KidZone, food trucks, drag story hour, performances by Detox and Lucky Starzzz.

A2ZERO MONTHLY CLOTHING SWAPS
August 21, 4-7 p.m.
Third Thursday of each month.
Larcom City Hall, 301 E Huron St.
These are a perfect way to give your gently used clothes a new home, and you might just find an item of clothing you have been looking for, without having to buy it new. How clothing swaps work: Each person can bring up to five items of clothing in good condition (no rips, holes, stains, or unwashed items please!). Accessories are also welcome. You can take clothing without bringing anything, or bring clothing without taking anything. Hosted by the Office of Sustainability and Innovations

GROUNDCOVER NEWS 15th ANNIVERSARY PARTY
Thursday, September 4, 6-8 p.m.
First Congregational Church of A2
For the first time, Groundcover is celebrating a major milestone. Join us for an evening of reunion, music, food and drink, and a gallery walk of Groundcover's history. Be a part of celebrating where we started, where we are, and where we are going! Purchase tickets online at givebutter.com/gcn15

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Submit an event to be featured in the next edition:
submissions@groundcovernews.com

Birthday freebies in Washtenaw County

KAYLA WISEMAN
U-M student contributor

Most people don't know about the almost-endless amount of free stuff one can receive just because they get a year older. Free things provide many people with joy and can be very beneficial. Furthermore, birthdays are a day to celebrate and a day to feel special about oneself. On the business side of doing business, birthday freebies are a way to thank customers and attract new ones. The possibilities for freebies are endless – from free food, drinks, clothes or discounts on clothes to movie theater discounts, etc.

All the freebies should be added to your list of stops to make on your birthday. Not only do you get free stuff, but it's a way to make an adventure out of your birthday.

To find freebies you need to search online. A simple search for "birthday discounts" or "birthday freebies" within one's local area is the first step. Then search for local restaurants' or food chains' websites to find these deals. Next, search reward programs that give you freebies or discounts on your birthday.

For food and drink there are endless possibilities for free stuff. At 7-Eleven you can get a free Slurpee. At Buffalo Wild Wings you can get seven free wings. Auntie Anne's offers a free soft pretzel. At Baskin Robbins you can get a free 2.5 ounce ice cream scoop. Chili's will give a free dessert from their menu, as will Applebee's with a minimum purchase. Another free birthday scoop at Cold Stone Creamery can be a great reward. Starbucks offers a free drink or food item through their rewards app. IHOP gives a free pancake stack for birthdays with a membership in their rewards program. Olive Garden offers a free dessert coupon.

Local restaurants in Ann Arbor like Argus Farm Stop Cafe offer a free drink. TAQ or Afternoon Delight gifts a free dessert with purchase of a meal. Additionally, Zingerman's offers many birthday discounts and freebies. Zingerman's Bakehouse gives a free loaf of bread (with value up to $6.99) with any purchase. At Zingermans' Deli, receive 15% off everything with a valid ID. Then, at Zingerman's Coffee Company you will receive 50% off any hot chocolate drink. To finish off, Zingerman's Creamery will grant you one free gelato. Another restaurant that offers a free dessert with a meal is Cafe Zola/Zola Bistro. They give out a free nutella banana crepe with a purchase. A big freebie is at Northside Grill which includes a free breakfast or lunch entree until 3 p.m. with ID.

On the other hand, there are other free birthday gifts or discounts that don't involve food or drink. The Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase allows you to bring three guests to attend a show for free in the month of your birthday. Planet Rock gives members a free day pass during their birthday month. AMC movie theatergoers receive a free large popcorn loaded onto their AMC stubs account. For clothes or shopping, the Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop gives 25% off total purchase (up to $10) on your birthday with valid ID.

The possibilities of freebies out there are endless! To check out more, a simple Google search in one area will provide a list, including if membership or ID is required. Finding birthday discounts and freebies is an adventure itself and it always feels good to get offers that save money. It shows that when a business supports the community, the community celebrates you! Therefore, on your birthday go check out some of these nice offers and get some free stuff!

from the ARCHIVES

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

Real Change is possible, starting small and thinking big

SUSAN BECKETT
Publisher emeritus

"Real Change! Real Change!" exclaimed the man on the Seattle sidewalk as I passed through the supermarket doors. I was confused.

Did he think I'd be giving him wooden nickels? Upon learning he was homeless and offering to sell me a newspaper, I eagerly traded my dollar for his paper and had an aha moment — this was a brilliant application of microenterprise here in the United States!

Twenty years of working on solutions to global poverty familiarized me with microcredit projects of many forms. The Grameen bank became famous when it and Mohammed Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize, yet it was a Kenyan micro lender, Jamii Bora, that sprang to my mind.

After a couple of years of lending money to the very poor so they could start their own small businesses, Jamii Bora experimented with offering beggars small items like ribbons they could sell instead of begging. It was immediately apparent that most people preferred selling to begging and many of them went on to become successful entrepreneurs.

Joyce Wairimu eventually opened six businesses and now employs many of her former colleagues. Wilson Maina, once a thief, now owns four businesses. He scours the streets for boys like him and has convinced hundreds to get started in a business instead of stealing. In 1999 Jamii Bora started with loans to 50 beggars in one of the worst slums in Nairobi. By the end of 2007, they had 170,000 savers and 60,000 borrowers.

Microcredit offers the poorest of the poor a chance at economic self-sufficiency. For many it is a path of redemption; an opportunity to overcome poor choices made or circumstances thrust upon them earlier in their lives. They have a saying at Jamii Bora: "We have fast climbers out of poverty and we have slow climbers, but everyone is a climber."

That's my wish for this newspaper: that it provides an economic toe hold for our vendors to use in their climb, and the wisdom and awareness we as a community need to nurture their efforts.

Originally published in the July/ August 2010 edition of Groundcover News — the first edition of Groundcover.

This year we're activating the archive

LINDSAY CALKA
Publisher

If you've ever been to the Groundcover News office, you know that there is a treasure hidden on the back wall of our one room office: the 15-year-old print archive. Stacks of bundles of street newspapers so tall they nearly hit the ceiling. Annually we rearrange and reorganize, purging extras and making space for more papers to be added every two weeks.

The first time I came to the basement of Bethlehem United Church of Christ I was stunned by the magnitude of it. So many editions, filled with even more timeless stories, perspectives and ideas. I wanted to read them all! And that was in 2018. Seven years later, new people are still learning about Groundcover every day. This might be someone's first purchase and read of Groundcover News ... that's a lot of catching up to do.

Even back when the plan for celebrating the 15th anniversary of Groundcover was still just a private brainstorming document on my computer, "activating the archive" was top on the list.

Multiple times a week, if not every day, we dive into the archive at the Groundcover News office. It might be to build upon the reporting of a local issue or happening, sometimes it's to respond to or reference an idea, to check in on a date of something or someone. Vendors will often want copies of the past pieces they authored to share with new customers and friends.

Print is important, and it has staying power.

From July 25, 2025 to July 3, 2026, Groundcover News will be publishing 26 outstanding pieces from our archive. "From the archive — 15 years of news and solutions from the ground up" aims to uplift pieces that tell the story of Groundcover News, tell the stories of our vendors and writers, and provide narrative on the past 15 years of the homeless and low-income community of Washtenaw County. What things have changed for the better? The worse? What can we learn, or learn again, from the folks who've "been saying it this whole time ..."

If you can't wait to see what we come up with, the entire digital archive is already accessible on our website, under the "Street News" tab. Soon, there will also be a catalog of all pieces published in all 247 issues of Groundcover, searchable by title, author and topic. That will be accessible under the "Groundcover 15" tab.

Reading, organizing, categorizing, preserving and activating has been a group effort. Special shoutout to the students of U-M's English 221 Fall 2024 and Winter 2025 classes, who under the direction of Professor John Buckley and archivist Mira Simonton-Chao, prepared this digital archive catalogue.

We will be able to compensate the authors of these reprints, and afford the extra printing cost of the page expansion it necessitated, thanks to a mini-grant from the University Michigan's Year of Democracy project.

Glenn Gates, with recent help from Libby Chambers, has been a longtime guardian of the print archive, repurposing food pantry boxes and old, curbed shelves as it has grown over the years. Bella Martinez has put in hours converting the digital PDFs to raw text documents that we can input into upcoming editions.

see **ARCHIVE** next page ➡

Happy 15th Anniversary Groundcover News!

LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover vendor No. 56

I want to say Happy 15th Anniversary to Groundcover News,
Thank you for publishing all the things that you do.
It has and is a vessel for people to express parts of their life stories,
Also different opinions, perspectives, and points of views.
Thanks for providing self-employment where we can work where we choose.
Thank you, and Happy 15th Anniversary again, Groundcover News!

A few things you might not know about Groundcover News

MIKE JONES
Groundcover vendor No. 113

You might not know that Groundcover News has a podcast! "Groundcover Speaks" is a blind and print disabled accessible audio archive of Groundcover News. Groundcover Speaks is produced through a collaboration with 5th Avenue Studios, located at the Downtown Ann Arbor Library and Groundcover News to bring the voices of Groundcover News vendors to more community members, and can be heard on the Ann Arbor District Library's website or on Spotify. To listen to your favorite vendor articles, go to "Groundcover Speaks."

Groundcover also has a newly updated website, groundcovernews.org, where you can learn more about Groundcover. You can keep up with upcoming Groundcover events, read past Groundcover issues in the archive section and more!

Do you know that Groundcover is a part of a street newspaper syndicate called International Network of Street Papers? 92 street papers in 35 countries, published in 25 languages, make up their network. So, when traveling throughout the United States or abroad, be on the lookout for street newspapers.

INSP facts:

- 3.2 million readers worldwide;
- 904 volunteers worldwide supporting our network;
- Over 390,000 people in poverty have been supported since the first street paper was published in 1989;
- 5,730 vendors sell street papers at any one time;
- 13.15 million street papers were sold across the world in 2021;
- 1,350 towns and cities had a street paper presence in 2021.

Groundcover News facts:

- Groundcover News comes out with a new issue every other Friday.
- Groundcover vendors pay fifty cents for every copy and resell the newspaper for two dollars making a minimum of $1.50 profit.
- Groundcover vendors get paid for published writings and photo submissions, and for reciting their article for the Groundcover Speaks podcast.
- Those who have experienced homelessness can write and send photos to Groundcover, and if published, they also receive money for their work.
- Individuals, organizations and businesses can advertise with Groundcover News
- Groundcover hosts public events such as poetry and Open Mic live performances
- Anyone can volunteer at Groundcover News
- Groundcover News is celebrating 15 years of bringing awareness to homelessness, poverty and social justice issues, from 2010-2025. Celebrate with us, all year long!

➡ **ARCHIVE** from last page

We know we are best suited to act in the present and plan for the future if we understand our past. We hope this column serves to celebrate the many amazing voices, experiences, and ideas in our community and better preserves the diversity of thought and expression that has contributed to social change locally for 15 years.

Start small, think big

The first installment of this column begins with Susan Beckett's first article, printed in the first edition of Groundcover News, the July / August 2010 edition. If you don't know already, Beckett is our founder and fierce publisher emeritus. Her essay recounts the street newspaper sale in Seattle that sparked the idea for Groundcover News; it explains the philosophy behind the unique economic model of the street newspaper: microentrepreneurship. (Little did we know, 15 years later, we would still be collaborating with our sister street paper, Real Change!)

A hand-up, not a hand-out — an idea shared by the other members of the International Network of Street Newspapers and an idea that has always shaped our policies and practices. This foundational philosophy draws a line between Groundcover News and social service agencies. Although we have always partnered with these organizations in Washtenaw County, our mission is focused on economic opportunity and social change through written word and relationships.

For Groundcover, this looks like pointing resources towards hosting workshops and trainings on financial literacy, street sales, starting a business or opening a bank account, rather than casework staff or expanding donation services. Even better when this support is facilitated by peers.

When we invest in the newspaper, we do so to equip Groundcover vendors to be a part of that growth.

Read more on page 8 about the origin story, and look out for "From the archives" in future editions.

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Ypsi Stories Podcast Episode 27
Listen at ypsilibrary.org/ypsistories

Historian Jerome Drummond talks about how the Michigan Central Railroad played such a large part in Ypsilanti's growth, and how railroads benefitted Michigan as part of a national transportation network.

FEATURED EVENT
DOCUMENT SHREDDING
Saturday | Aug 9 | 10am-1pm
YDL-Whittaker Parking Lot

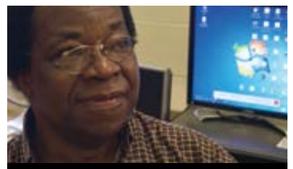
Paper shredding for residents of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, and Superior Township.
- Bring up to four copy paper boxes or grocery bags of documents per person.
- No 3-ring binders, spiral notebooks, large binder clips, photographs, magazines, newspapers, hanging files, plastic bags, or water-damaged materials.

Funded in part by a Washtenaw County Waste Reduction Sponsorship.

YPSILANTI DISTRICT LIBRARY

Groundcover News turns 15: Origin story, community impacts and a brighter future

Happy Birthday Groundcover News! This year we celebrate the 15-year anniversary of Groundcover News. This is a significant milestone.



WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

GROUNDCOVER
NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP
$2
SEPTEMBER 2019 | VOLUME 10 ISSUE 9
YOUR DONATION DIRECTLY BENEFITS THE VENDORS. PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.
VENDOR PROFILE: PONY BUSH, PAGE 8
GROUNDCOVER
NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Origin Story

A famous Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu, is credited with the ancient proverb which says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

The journey of Groundcover News started when Susan Beckett, Groundcover founder and Publisher Emeritus, purchased a street newspaper from a homeless man in front of a Seattle coffee shop. When she came home to Ann Arbor after visiting her daughter in Seattle, it dawned on her that homeless individuals could be given a voice and empowerment while earning some income from streetpaper selling. It was a bright idea, which was needed in the Ann Arbor - Ypsilanti metropolitan area.

The Great Recession of 2008 and 2009 damaged the auto industry in Detroit and Southeast Michigan counties. The autoparts plating and supplier businesses in Ypsilanti laid off many employees and many Detroiters who faced layoffs, evictions and uncertain futures came to Ann Arbor looking for income and employment opportunities.

Beckett and other civic-minded community leaders were aware of the homeless situation. Research surveys done by the Washtenaw County government and the city of Ann Arbor showed exponential increases in homeless populations year to year. Groundcover News was one of the outcomes.

A valuable article written on September 29, 2010, by Jan Schlain of Ann Arbor Observer shed some light on Beckett's creation of Groundcover News. The title of Ms. Schlain's article was, "Planting Groundcover News: A homeless newspaper takes root."

From her interview with Beckett we learned a few specific details. Schlain wrote the following revealing paragraph: "Susan Beckett, a former software engineer and teacher, is the paper's founder and chief volunteer. She was visiting her daughter in Seattle last summer when she bought a newspaper from a homeless person outside a coffee shop. When she returned home she discussed the idea of starting something similar here with members of several groups, including RESULTS, the social action committee at Temple Beth Emeth and Organizing for America - OFA." The quote continues: "Beckett said, 'One OFA leader, Tad Wysor, introduced me to a young man, Marquise Williams, who had expressed interest in helping those in poverty find their voice.' Beckett continued, 'Marquise and I visited various community meals, described the paper and asked people to give us their contact information if they were interested in participating in any way.'"

Schlain also reported, "A friend introduced Beckett to Laurie Lounsbury, a former reporter and editor for papers in Petoskey and Charlevoix, who volunteered to become the paper's editor. Beckett recalled, 'Marquise, Laurie and I met to do some initial formulation, then I contacted everyone who had ever expressed interest, and we met at First Baptist Church.' Beckett continued, 'I organized the meeting with help from Ron Gregg, a parishioner at First Baptist who manages the interfaith outreach mailing list and organized the meeting to address the homeless situation.' Beckett continued, '…they defined our core values, mission and operating principles.'"

Groundcover News volunteer meeting in 2019, attended by Lindsay Calka, Susan Beckett, office staff, student volunteers and social work interns.

Schlain observed that the mission statement discussed by Beckett and others was included in the first issue of the paper. The mission was "to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty."

The group that met at First Baptist Church also discussed the choice of a name for the new paper. Lounsbury suggested the paper be named "Groundcover" because "It's really local news that starts from the ground up." In 2010 there were more than 100 "street newspapers" around the world like Groundcover. Beckett remembered that the editor of the Toledo Streets newspaper offered her some advice, and a D.C. paper shared their computer files, training programs and tracking forms. These street papers in Toledo and Washington, D.C. are members of the International Network of Street Papers, which used to have a division called the North America Street Newspapers Association (NASNA).

The Ann Arbor Observer also reported that a homeless action group called 1Matters donated $1000 to print the first issue of Groundcover News. In her conversation with the Ann Arbor Observer reporter, Beckett noted that after the first issue of Groundcover News was published, she attended a NASNA conference in Chicago. She collected samples of city street newspapers, including the ones from large cities such as Chicago and Seattle which had hundreds of vendors who sell them. Beckett did think that as the Groundcover Newspaper "expands into more of Washtenaw County, it will be able to accommodate more sales people." That was prophetic. It is happening now! Since 2010, 681 vendors have sold Groundcover News. As of July 2025, there are 45 active vendors selling in Washtenaw County, mostly in the city of Ann Arbor.

The idea of Groundcover News became an innovative solution to the plight of the homeless. It was eventually welcomed by the Main Street Business Association, The Downtown Development Authority, Ann Arbor City Council, Washtenaw Board of Commissioners, Interfaith Council of Ann Arbor, Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor Civic Foundation and homeless advocates from the University of Michigan, to mention a few.

Leadership transition, community impacts and vision for the future

Groundcover News has been

see **HISTORY** page 11 ➡

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me." + Christ Jesus (John 8:42)
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Kiwanis Thrift Sale

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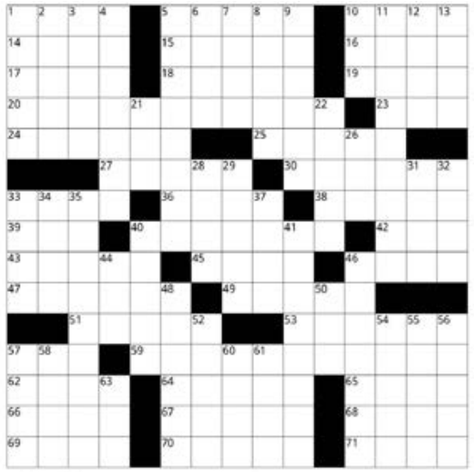
LEADD SUPPORT TEAM: WILLIE STURDIVANT, JR., HAILEY RICHARDS, SARAH REISS, JACQULEYN CAMPBELL
LEARN MORE about programs funded by the community mental health and public safety preservation millage.

CROSSWORD *by Regina Durest*

15 YEARS! CELEBRATION

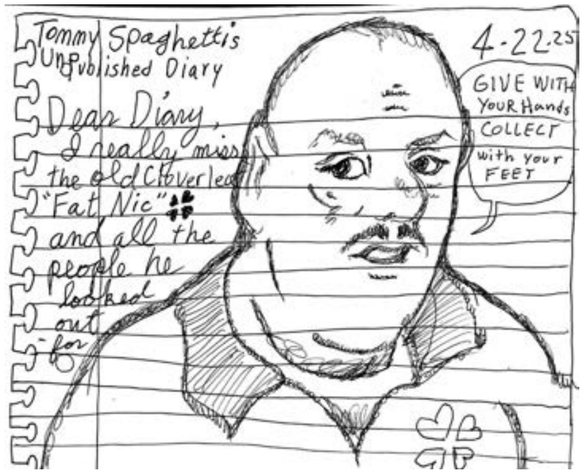


ACROSS

1. Jeanne ___
5. Critic, less formally
10. Something a toddler might throw
14. Battleship guess
15. Scrabble piece
16. Word before skirt or me
17. Moist
18. Lo-cal brews
19. "In that case..."
20. Washtenaw County's street newspaper, colloquially
23. Pranks, as with a restroom necessity
24. Work, in Guadalajara
25. Online memo
27. Dadaist Max
30. Alternative to "free" on a roadside sign
33. Robin's home
36. City circle
38. Blue hedgehog of video game fame
39. ___ Morales, former Bolivian president
40. "Get on that!"
42. With 50-down, sauce for fried fish
43. Like a character in "The Three Little Pigs" or "Little Red Riding Hood"
45. ____ lang syne
46. You, to Shakespeare (but not Will)
47. Went bad, as milk
49. Notoriously slow-moving animal
51. Fork prongs
53. Popular spot to buy or sell street papers in Ann Arbor
57. Nail polish brand
59. Once-per-year celebratory event
62. See 22-down
64. German identifiers
65. Bit of hair
66. Late-night host Jay
67. "And Still ___," Maya Angelou poem
68. Singer Guthrie
69. Playground retort
70. Adjust, as a thermostat
71. Woohoos

DOWN

1. Avoid
2. Cost ___ and a leg
3. Swab again
4. Juliet's family name
5. Grasped tightly
6. Suffix with symptom
7. Jackson 5 member
8. Rise, to a ballerina
9. Begrudge
10. "Who ___ to judge?"
11. Amendment dealing with voting rights
12. Organization connecting more than 90 street papers in 25 countries
13. Uncles, in Cuba
21. Last half of Gilda, Tina or Jennifer's last name
22. With 62-across, local coffee supplier and this paper's first advertiser
26. Bout stopper, for short
28. Gazpacho or salmorejo
29. Tulle skirts
31. Set of Southeast Asian ethnic groups
32. Beige
33. With 35-down, "___ and ___ from the ground up"
34. Sautéing acronym
35. See 33-down
37. Unit of paper towel
40. One of Scar's cronies in "The Lion King"
41. 1781 Mozart opera
44. TGIF wkdy
46. "Through here"
48. Menace of classic comics
50. See 42-across
52. Trap or drum
54. Nigerian currency
55. "R u 4 real?"
56. Keyboard mistakes
57. Irish name meaning "golden princess"
58. Potential creative submission to the paper
60. "Tag" response
61. With a badge, uniform for a street paper vendor
63. ___ Locks, Sault Ste. Marie, MI


Tommy Spaghetti's Unpublished Diary
Dear Diary,
I really miss the old Cloverleaf "Fat Nic" and all the people he looked out for
4-22-25
GIVE WITH YOUR Hands COLLECT with your FEET

Sudoku ★★★★☆☆ 4puz.com

1						4	5	6
		9	1	5		2		
						1		
5	1	2			6			
	8		4		1		6	
			8			9	1	2
		6						
		1		3	2	8		
3	2	8						1

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS *July 11, 2025 edition*

3	1	8	7	4	9	5	6	2
7	6	5	2	1	8	3	9	4
2	9	4	6	5	3	8	7	1
8	4	3	1	7	5	6	2	9
9	5	2	3	6	4	7	1	8
1	7	6	9	8	2	4	5	3
6	8	7	4	9	1	2	3	5
5	3	9	8	2	6	1	4	7
4	2	1	5	3	7	9	8	6

Hobo News: the first street paper?

OWEN CLAYTON
International Network of Street Papers

On 12 April 1923, 200 Chicagoans attended a public debate, chaired by the notorious sex-positive "clap doctor" Ben Reitman, between three university students and another trio who identified themselves as "hobos." The question was whether Kansas ought to establish a court to mediate industrial disputes, with the university students arguing in favour and the hobos against.

We know of this event thanks to an account by one of the debate's three judges, the hobo-turned-sociologist Nels Anderson. According to Anderson, the students were long-winded and "presented their arguments in the usual conventional manner," which left them "unable to get the ear of the audience." Their main argument was that U.S. institutions could be trusted to adjudge industrial disputes fairly.

The hobos, by contrast, spoke of their real-world experience of being in front of American judges. They spoke of going to prison for violating so-called "Tramp laws," which criminalised poverty by making it an offence to cross State lines "without visible means of support." For these men, judges were a class enemy who could not be trusted.

Anderson describes the three hobo speakers as being logical, well prepared and "caustic," especially a man called John Laughman, who "was humorous and terrible by turns." Laughman in particular was used to public speaking, being a regular participant in open-air debates held at "Bughouse Square," just in front of Chicago's Newberry Library. The hobos won the debate, winning over two of the three judges, presumably (though he does not say so explicitly) including Anderson.

This debate took place in Chicago's "Hobo College," which was one of many institutions run by the International Brotherhood Welfare Association (IBWA), an organization founded by the "Millionaire Hobo" James Eades How. These colleges provided accommodation and free education for transient workers, or, as the IBWA, called them, hobos.

Though it predated the IBWA, Eades How's organization aggressively campaigned to privilege the term "hobo" over alternatives, such as "tramp" or "bum." They adopted Dr. Reitman's distinction that "[t]he hobo works and wanders, the tramp dreams and wanders and the bum drinks and wanders."

One reason for making such a distinction was to avoid the legal consequences of being called a tramp. Another reason was because, in a context in which U.S. transients were demonised as, at best, lazy and feckless, and, at worst, dangerous to women and society more generally, the IBWA sought to reframe its members as hard-working Americans. It was hobos, the IBWA proudly asserted, who built up the American West following the closure of the frontier around 1900, working in lumber camps, mines, mills, railroads, harvest fields and other places.

Key to this campaign was the "Hobo" News, which the IBWA launched several times but the most sustained publication run of which was between 1915 and 1924. The "Hobo" News is the world's earliest known street newspaper. Like many subsequent papers, it provided subsistence by allowing vendors to keep a portion (in this case, half) of the proceeds.

The hobo vendors did not just sell the paper: they also wrote for it. Around 80 different transient contributors wrote for the paper, providing news articles, short stories, poems, comic "society news" pieces, and even a parody version of an agony aunt. This allowed the "Hobo" News to brag that it was "OF THE HOBOES, BY THE HOBOES AND FOR THE HOBOES".

This pioneering model was hugely successful, with the paper selling 20,000 copies per month at its height. There were even international vendors selling the paper in Japan, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, and England, and an (unsuccessful) attempt to establish a London version of the Hobo College.

The material on the pages varied over time, and there were battles as to what kind of paper the "Hobo" News ought to be. Some favoured accounts of lived experience, while others sought to make the paper into a pro-Soviet propaganda organ.

Though clearly written with a male audience in mind, its representation of women improved over time, not least when How appointed a female editor, Laura Clarke. Unfortunately, the paper lacks any representation from transients of color, and some articles display the dated racist humour of their day, though its pages also contain debates about how strong an anti-racist stance the IBWA ought to take.

The paper advocated many progressive policies, including a living wage and a universal eight-hour workday. Most importantly, though, it provided a platform for a widely despised group of unhoused people to demonstrate their writing talent, humor and intellectual ability. As the famous author Jack London put it, "Hurrah for the hobo newspaper! I wish there'd been something like that afloat when I was knocking around on the road."

But calling the "Hobo" News the first street paper may not be entirely accurate. Most papers of this kind from earlier periods have not survived, so it is difficult to know what we are missing. We do not even know when the "Hobo" News stopped publishing. The copies of the "Hobo" News that we do have survived through chance, being kept on open shelves in the St. Louis Public Library for decades without the library being aware of what they had.

Other treasures might come to light in the future, changing how we view the history of street papers yet again.

Courtesy of INSP.ngo

➡ **HISTORY** from page 8

successful from its inception in 2010 to the present day. In May 2021, the torch of Groundcover leadership was passed from Beckett to Lindsay Calka, the present Managing Director and Publisher.

Reflecting on this, Calka shared, "In 2021 Groundcover not only was recovering from the pandemic, but underwent a leadership transition from being directed by our founder, to a full-time managing director and publisher. As we've grown and changed to adapt to the demands of that change, so many wonderful, now foundational, aspects of our organization were innovated: increased publication frequency, the the freelance writing program and expanded arts and culture programming, just to name a few."

Calka commented that she sees the 15th anniversary campaign as Groundcover's chance to reminisce, reflect and celebrate the contributions of the many vendors, volunteers and supporters who have been with Groundcover since the beginning. She also sees it as a chance to communicate the organization's immense impact to the community — jump starting the next "15 years of news and solutions from the ground up."

Conclusion

It started as a montly, one dollar paper. Vendors would purchase a paper for 25 cents and sell it for $1, keeping the balance of 75 cents as a profit. In March 2017, Groundcover News increased the selling price of each paper to $2. The vendor is expected to purchase a paper for 50 cents and sell it for $2. The vendor gets to keep a profit of $1.50 for each paper sold. Groundcover wants to help the vendors make more money and be able to pay their bills.

Groundcover News is now published every two weeks, and Special Issues come out twice a year. Circulation has surpassed pre-pandemic rates, and vendor income is higher than ever.

The visibility of and community engagement with Groundcover News are incredible. Many of the students and faculty members of U-M are aware of the paper. The businesses on Main Street, Fourth, Liberty and Washington streets are supportive of the newspaper's mission. The County government and the City government are supportive, recently offering monetary support. The Ann Arbor and the Ypsilanti District Libraries have shown remarkable partnership and collaboration in projects which involve Groundcover News.

In June of 2021, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, we published an article entitled, "Groundcover News turns 11: Making a difference, addressing life's most difficult challenges." We are grateful that the newspaper survived the pandemic. It is now thriving, with signals pointing to an even brighter future. We look forward to celebrating future milestones.

The healing of our ancestors

KEN PARKS
Groundcover vendor No. 490

The healing of our ancestors is our responsibility now as the mix of blessings and sins requires our attention and discriminating wisdom. “Water and the Spirit” by Malidoma Patrice Somé introduces us to this challenge and the revolutionary breakthrough that is coming as we work this field. I bought the book, read 11 transformative pages, showed it around and lost track of it.

I have been a book person all my life and read voraciously until macular degeneration hit me a couple of years ago. My collection of unorganized books includes two that belong to the Ann Arbor Library — "Escape From Evil" by Ernest Becker and “The Vitamin Cure for Eyes” are books I want to find and get back to the library. I may have left them by the magnifying screen at the library. I habitually show books around hoping someone will master them and help me put them into practice. I really need a new take on my aging challenges. Age-related is added to macular degeneration as if it’s one concept. The actual cause is vascular endothelial growth factor, called veg f in the lab; it is a kind of enzyme that damages the capillaries in the eyeball and causes damage. It comes from an imbalance in the gut biome. Allopathic medicine has come up with an expensive anti-veg f injection, but has no clues about a healthier gut biome. The struggle for good health is complex and intense. The wisdom of our ancestors is vast and can be brought into play as we blend allopathic with all branches of healing. I am looking for lamb’s quarters now. Our ancestors know this weed that is medicine.

Honoring the past without getting lost in habitual patterns and narratives is rarely accomplished. Many are those who say forget the past. I think this is because trauma fixations perpetuate traumatic patterns and become obstacles to healing. Viewing the past with detachment is an important skill. Calm, clear and complete is possible as we view reality by skillful means. Full and complete awakening can happen all at once but usually comes in stages. I am in the struggle for the next stage but ego fixation is active in my life. Reality is always present and alive. Ego fixation wants to organize reality to some preconceived outcome.

When I wrote “Food as Medicine” for the Groundcover News magazine, I began with the mental food that we process in the play of the mind. Mind training is a lifelong process of learning about a healthy mind. Find the teacher who cares and is experienced. Malidoma, the author of “Water and the Spirit" mentioned above, can help us. He once taught at the University of Michigan. The revolutionary potential for a collaboration between Groundcover News and the University of Michigan is waiting to be explored. We have feelers out and hope to update you with plans in the next issue. You can prepare by listening to the January 6, 2024 interview with the University of Michigan School of Public Health’s Dr. Vic Strecher, based on his book “Life With Purpose."

For Two Homeless Kevins, One a Blackman, One a Whiteman

PHILIP SPINK
Groundcover vendor No. 630

There are so many gentle homeless people in the world —
Kind people, loving people.
They may not be people who fit in easily.
They may be too emotionally sensitive
For nine to five battlegrounds.
But they are good.
But they are hearts in full.
But they are people who should not be forgotten,
And left to lives of dust and sorrow
Out on the hardened streets
Of the American dream falling,
Away, I fear, from true community,
That shares hands and hopes and hearths and homes
When cold winds blow and people hurt.

Bethlehem United Church of Christ
whoever you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here
423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 734-665-6149
Bethlehem-ucc.org facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2
Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office
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U OF M FOOTBALL PARKING FOR ALL HOME GAMES: $30
Please visit the church website at:
www.bethlehem-ucc.org
for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.
Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither Do We. United Church of Christ
Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person and via Live Stream

Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide

SHAWN SWOFFER
Groundcover vendor No. 574

As I look into your eyes
I see endless amounts of time that we have together
holding each other looking into each other's eyes
loving each other and just being together
wondering what our future will be like
this is courageous love
true love and true guessing no wishing
I can visualize the love that we have inside
that's so spiritual and so free and loving
I never expected this but everybody gets a chance at love
love cannot be found but love can be recognized
this is the love story that I feel inside
love has found me deep inside
nowhere to run no where to hide
love deep inside
this is the love I recognize inside

Exile from State Street, part two: "M Block"

ROBBIE FEBRUARY
Groundcover contributor

In case you haven’t read Exile from State Street part one, I will summarize it for you. Firstly, I am currently in the state prison, after serving time at Washtenaw County jail, and part of my sentence is being banished from Washtenaw County after my release in late 2027. Secondly, I am very sorry for my crimes and I seek opportunities to make amends for my behavior which occurred between 2019 and 2023. Third, the most active part of Washtenaw County jail is called the ITR. The ITR stands for intake, transfer and release. Fourth, my friend Wild, who’s now with me here in prison but also spent time in the Washtenaw County jail, is an excellent person who will do well when he returns to society. Lastly, I am thankful for this time to rest, recuperate and rehabilitate. I was living in a way that I was a hazard to myself and others.

People spending more than a long weekend in jail are moved to various jail units depending on the seriousness of their accused crimes. Those with misdemeanors are separated from those charged with felonies. This separation first occurs after an arraignment with the magistrate.

I was charged with several felonies, but I also had some poor mental health symptoms. Therefore, I spent the first month in observation. Observation is a separate unit where there are constant checks on individuals detained there. There are video cameras constantly on the individuals and they are dressed in “turtle suits.“ Turtle suits are padded uniforms that are secured with long strips of Velcro. They are awkward and form a shell to protect the individual contained therein. I didn’t mind the turtle suit when it was my time to wear it. It felt like a weighted blanket attached by duct tape. I was eventually moved to “M Block” where many of the individuals facing felony charges are housed.

There are multiple reasons I am spending the next two decades in exile from Washtenaw County. There are none that I am proud of. I have chosen not to crowd the article with a laundry list of crimes I committed during the winter of 2022. One of the crimes I feel most embarrassed about was breaking and entering a daycare. I did it because I was cold and hungry, but I wasn’t starving or facing frostbite. My life wasn’t in jeopardy. I also craved the serotonin spike of getting away with it.

An inmate who would like to remain anonymous — we’ll call him Steve — is spending some time in prison with me. He has good things to say about M Block. “It’s a privileged block,’ he says. “Four-man rooms, it’s the best block in the jail except for K Block. They have a movie room and a gym.’ I had forgotten about the movie room. Here at Cotton, the facility in Jackson where I am currently housed, we have eight-man cubes. The summers are hot and crowded. Sometimes arguments turn into physical altercations. It’s easy to get pulled into someone else’s problems when you live in such close quarters.

I recently completed my required course “Thinking for a Change.” It was an advantage to get it done early in my sentence. I learned a lot about emotional regulation and the links between cognition and behavior. Steve is being held up by a class right now. He needs to complete it before he will be released. He expressed some frustration with the process.

He said, “In Washtenaw County jail, I learned a lot from the Dawn Farms and GED courses. Washtenaw Literacy was my favorite one. We were allowed to research and write on a topic we were interested in.” I asked him what he learned during his year in county jail. He said, “I learned how to deal with isolation and how to cope with assholes.”

I recall the food at Washtenaw County jail to be sparse, but serviceable. Steve had a differing opinion. He said, “The food was horrible. Breakfast was okay, but every other meal was worse than any other county.“ We eat from a regular calendar of meals here at Cotton. There are eight days a month where dinner is served between pieces of day-old bread. It’s not all gloom and doom though. Highlights from the menu are biscuits and gravy, chicken on the bone, and spaghetti.

I often wonder what I will do and where I will fit in society when I am released. I asked my interviewee about his post-release plans and he said, “I have never been on parole before, but Washtenaw County has really good programs like A Brighter Way.” He continued, “I am going to get in contact with Alcoholics Anonymous, and get a sponsor.” A few days after the interview, he got into an altercation with his cubee, and was sent to “the hole” for punishment. He lost his spot in class and will be detained for a longer time because of it. I wish him the best but I will ensure that I don’t run into similar circumstances during the rest of my stay.

Creativity

JALICIA HARRIS
Groundcover vendor No. 484

Creativity is important to me. It’s important because it gives me a different way to look at things or a way to come up with something that is inspiring and different. I think that when you get used to seeing a certain thing the same way it can sometimes feel a bit dull.

What makes you feel more creative? For me it's the sounds that change my vibration. Vibration is an essential concept in life because it is the fundamental building block of the universe. Every single thing in the universe is made up of energy, which is constantly vibrating. We can see that as we experience the world and all the things in it, from the air we breathe to the ground we walk on. And we can create ways to vibrate higher from being inspired by something in the world. Everything is vibrating at its own unique frequency. My creativity is something that makes me unique.

I believe our vibrations connect at some level which gives us good, or sometimes bad, feelings. We should pay attention to giving off good vibrations (or energy) that are positive and create a flow around us. That creates good vibes for the world. I think that if you do that the universe gives it back to you.

Our vibrations are created from our energy and I like creatively exploring things that are around me, trying to see from different perspectives each time I look at an object or person; or comparing things to see if I can view them in a new light, or create a new idea or thought depending on how I am inspired.

Ancient Greeks believed that the world was made up of four elements: fire, air, earth and water. They believed these elements were in constant vibration and they interacted with each other and influenced the world around them. Everything in the universe is made up of atoms, which are constantly vibrating and emitting energy. This energy is responsible for the way we experience the world around us.

So we are responsible for creating a good energy within ourselves to ensure we are giving good vibes to the universe. This also helps us to attract a good vibration from the universe, in my opinion. I enjoy trying to create a good vibration. It calls for good mental focus. Using my mind and controlling my thoughts or meditating.

What’s your vibration? Have you ever spent time using your creativity? Creativity maybe hard to feel if you are experiencing a lack of inspiration. I suggest getting in tune with nature, by visiting a park or going on a gratitude walk or even listening to meditation music of different frequencies to help stimulate or unblock your creativity.

Frequencies are the rate at which something occurs or is repeated over a particular period of time in a given sample, or the rate at which a vibration occurs that continues a wave, either in a material, as in sound waves, or in electromagnetic field, as in radio waves and light, usually measured per second. Listening to these frequencies will change your vibration over time, so listening to that frequency at different times may change the aspect from which you perceive, causing an inspiration that sparks some level of creativity. So take your time while exploring ways to increase creativity.

Creativity makes the world a more colorful place. So get out there and create something with a positive vibe that will flow and create good energy around you! I’ve been working on using my creative mind to influence positive energy around me. I do this by, for example, feeding animals that come to my yard; or going on gratitude walks so that I can see different things that help me feel more positive; or hearing things such as a compliment from a person passing by, to help give off good energy and increase a positive vibe.

From hustle to healing: Leroy Pickett's journey to long-term recovery

JOHNATHAN GLASS
Home of New Vision Recovery Coach

Leroy Pickett was raised by his grandmother, whom he lovingly called "Mama." Born in 1919, Mama became the family's anchor after Leroy's mother passed away at the age of 21 from a rare blood clot. Leroy was only six. Though the loss was profound, his grandmother instilled in him a deep sense of resilience and faith. "She taught me how to keep going," Leroy shared.

He recalls a pivotal moment on Mother's Day years later, when grief finally caught up to him. Mama, finding him crying in her room, gently reminded him, "God loaned her to us, and in His wisdom, He took her back." That moment, Leroy says, gave him clarity: "In less than five minutes, Mama made sense of the human experience."

As a young teen, Leroy fell into the company of older peers who introduced him to marijuana. Though Mama warned him, he continued down that path, drawn to the excitement and perceived freedom of the lifestyle. By the early 1980s, that path led him to crack cocaine and eventually into dealing.

Leroy shared that it wasn't about getting high at first — it was about fitting in, feeling wanted, and later, supporting a lifestyle that increasingly revolved around substance use. The hustle was constant. "There was never enough cash," he said. "I was always hustling."

Eventually, that lifestyle led to legal consequences. He received his first arrest after borrowing a car in exchange for drugs—but when he returned it late, the owner reported it stolen. Leroy served six months in jail and was placed on probation, but did not comply.

During a later court appearance, Leroy met a judge who saw more than his charges. The judge acknowledged Leroy's academic history, the loss of his family, and the grief that had derailed him. "He asked what my grandmother would think of my choices," Leroy recalled. "That hit me hard." While Leroy wasn't ready for change just yet, the judge planted a seed of accountability that would grow in time.

Incarceration and the spark of change

From 1995 to 2013, Leroy served time in prison. But it was behind bars where he began reclaiming his life. He started reading, tutoring other incarcerated individuals, and working as a library clerk. "I read the entire Harry Potter series," he said proudly. Near the end of his sentence, Leroy reached out to 12 colleges in search of a fresh start.

Washtenaw Community College (WCC) responded with encouragement and even contacted the parole board to support his reentry. That affirmation made all the difference. He was released on August 6, 2013.

Leroy earned a certified welding credential from WCC but soon returned to Detroit. Old environments and relationships pulled him back into old habits. Between 2015 and 2016, he found himself once again entangled in substance use. "I knew the path only led to three places: death, prison, or a mental institution."

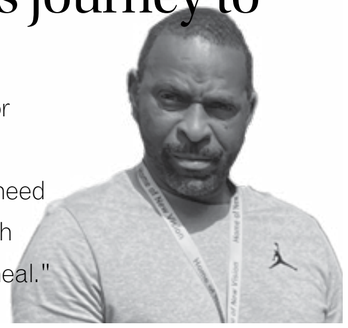
After four days without sleep and no insulin for his diabetes, Leroy entered Spera/Dawn Farm treatment in Washtenaw County. In his first group meeting, a counselor around his age asked him to look around and notice the absence of peers his age. "He said people with substance use disorder rarely make it to 50. That woke me up."

Eight years strong and giving back

Today, Leroy celebrates over eight years in long-term recovery. He works with Home of New Vision as a peer recovery coach through Project ASSERT, stationed at the University of Michigan Psychiatric Emergency Services. There, he supports individuals navigating mental health and substance use challenges.

His favorite part of the work? "Seeing the light come on in someone else's eyes. That's when I know it's working."

He continues his education, working toward his CADC certification and MDHHS Peer Recovery Coach credential. His long-term goal is to become a licensed therapist specializing in addiction recovery.



"If there was hope for me, there's hope for anyone. People just need to know they're worth the work it takes to heal."
— Leroy Pickett

Leroy credits his faith as a guiding force. "I'm not trying to preach, but having a relationship with the Lord has been the greatest gift of all."

Leroy is active in his recovery community, sponsors others, and plays a loving role in the lives of his daughter and grandchildren. Though he sometimes reflects on the years he lost, he embraces the wisdom and compassion that have emerged from his experience.

"If there was hope for me, there's hope for anyone. People just need to know they're worth the work it takes to heal."

Need Help?

Recovery begins with one brave step. If you or someone you love is struggling:

Home of New Vision: 3115 Professional Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48104 | 734-975-1602

Dawn Farm/Spera: 502 W Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104 | 734-669-8265

Recovery is possible. Help is available. And your story isn't over yet.

Thank you Groundcover News readers. The answer to "The Ocean Find" published May 30, 2025 was FALSE. The answer to "Sisterly Love" published July 11, 2025 was TRUE.
Felicia Wilbert, Truth Or Lies Mystery Lane.

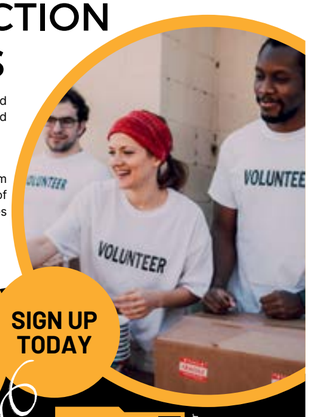
HOME OF new Vision
For Therapy, Recovery, and Change

HARM REDUCTION VOLUNTEERS

Are you compassionate, nonjudgmental, and committed to fostering safer environments and services for vulnerable populations?

Volunteer Today!

Volunteers will learn more about Harm Reduction and recovery services, the impact of substance use disorders on our communities and more.



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SCAN HERE
bit.ly/harmreductionvolunteer

AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES:
- Outreach and Distribution
- Outreach Kit Preparation
- Community Clean Up
- Community Engagement

INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE INTERACTING WITH THOSE EXPERIENCING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.

recovery **RESOURCE CORNER**

FRIENDS OF LITTLE HOUSE RECOVERY CENTER
802 N River St., Ypsilanti
734-219-5051 Recovery meetings 7 days a week. Call for times

IN THE ROOMS
intherooms.com/livemeetings/list
Online recovery meetings 24|7

AL-ANON
1475 Westfield Ave., Ann Arbor
734-995-4949
Meeting information: afgdistrict5.org|meeting-calendar
Meetings for family and friends of those with an addiction. Literature about working Al-Anons program and supportive readings

ALANO CLUB
995 N Maple Rd., Ann Arbor,
734-668-8138
Recovery meetings seven days a week. 10 a.m.- 9 p.m. Commissary, pool table and TV

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
1-800-230-4085
Call for meeting times.
michigan-na.org/washtenaw-area/meetings/

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, HURON VALLEY AREA INTERGROUP
31 S. Huron, Ypsilanti MI 48197
734-482-0707
Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday, 1:00-6:00 p.m.
Meeting Locator (Countywide and beyond) and Helpline Number 734-482- 5700.
Website includes up to date meeting locator and other resources:
hvai.org/

DAWN FARM
6633 Stony Creek Rd., Ypsilanti
734-485-8725
— Long term residential: Farm location (located in Ypsilanti 36 beds) and Dawn Farm Downtown location (located in Ann Arbor 13 beds)
— Up to 90 day residential
— Public funding available for those who qualify
— Transitional housing: Houses and apartments across Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti (160 beds total)
— 12 step meetings daily
— Outpatient services in Ann Arbor
— Community Corrections Outreach

HOME OF new Vision
For Therapy, Recovery, and Change

HARM REDUCTION

Connect with Home of New Vision's Ypsilanti Harm Reduction Program at our physical location or mobile sites. As our program grows, accessible hours may change. Confirm office and mobile sites by contacting us at 734-417-5864. Want to host a mobile site? Contact us today! Trainings and workshops also available.

Office Location Schedule:

Former Home of New Vision Engagement Center
103 Arnet
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
TheRide: AAATA 2015/2035 (Route 44)
734-417-5864

Tuesdays - 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Every Other Friday - 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Every Other Saturday - 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Mobile Locations Schedule:

Amoco 505 South Huron St. Ypsilanti, MI 48197	Mondays 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
Water St. Trail & Michigan Ave. Lot Opposite Heritage Bridge Ypsilanti, MI 48197	Wednesdays 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM
Frog Island Park 699 Rice St. Ypsilanti, MI 48197	Wednesdays 1:30 PM to 2:30 PM
Delonis Center 312 W Huron St. Ann Arbor, MI 48103	Every Other Friday 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

OUR SERVICES
ANONYMOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL

- Safer Use Supplies and Education
- Overdose Prevention and Reversal – Education, Workshops and Trainings
- Naloxone Distribution
- Syringe Disposal
- Referrals and Resources
- Safer Sex Education and Condom Distribution
- Mobile Outreach
- Hepatitis C Testing

homeofnewvision.org
mcooper@homeofnewvision.org
734.417.5864

Saturday, August 23rd
11am - 6pm
Parkridge Park

Join us for the annual Parkridge Summerfest and Joe Dulin Community Day!

Community Resource Fair
12pm to 3pm

- Nearly 100 community organizations
- Community resources
- University of Michigan Health tent with skin checks, lung function tests, hiring managers, and more!

This year's event will also include:
- Local music artists
- Free food
- Small business vendors

Grills, alcohol, and dogs are NOT allowed!

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Collaborative solutions for a promising future

Easy banana ice cream

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

Ingredients:
4 cups frozen very ripe banana chunks
¼ cup coconut cream (or Greek yogurt)

Directions:

Add the frozen bananas to the bowl of a food processor. Seal and start grinding on LOW, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl occasionally, keep going until the banana is in small pieces that look like coarse sand.

Add the cream.

Continue grinding on LOW until the mixture starts to look creamy, then switch to HIGH to make a smooth and creamy banana ice cream. Serve immediately.

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OFFER EXPIRES 8/22/2025

GROUNDCOVER 15

For the first time, Groundcover is celebrating a major milestone.

15 YEARS
OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS
FROM THE GROUND UP

Join us for an evening of reunion, music, food and drink, and a gallery walk of Groundcover's history.

Be a part of celebrating where we started, where we are, and where we are going!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2025
5:30-8 PM

First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor
608 E William St. Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Purchase tickets online at givebutter.com/gcn15

Sponsorship opportunities still available